MY FATHER'S VOICE IN PRAYER AND OTHER POEMS

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BY MAY HASTINGS NOTTAGE

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MY

FATHER'S VOICE

IN PRAYER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

MAY HASTINGS NOTTAGE

BOSTON
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1901

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DEDICATION.

TO MY MOTHER.

Oft when we sang an hymn at time of prayer
My father's voice would cease, and in its place
Another rise, less strong, and faltering where
His rose with mighty triumph in God's grace.
So for that voice now vainly listening
Whose vibrant music lingers in our ears,
I lift my weaker voice, oft choked with tears,
And sing because while here he bade me sing.

And as, a little child, I used to lay
My work, with tangled stitches, on thy knee,
So with their imperfections, I to-day
Do bring my songs, O mother sweet, to thee.
Content, if by fond mother-love approved
They sweep the harpstrings of dear memories,
And seem to wake, in fitful minor keys,
A faint, far echo of that voice beloved.

MY
FATHER'S VOICE IN PRAYER
AND
OTHER POEMS.

MY FATHER'S VOICE IN PRAYER.

In the silence that falls on my spirit
  When the clamor of life loudest seems,
Comes a voice that floats in tremulous notes
  Far over my sea of dreams.
I remember the dim old vestry
  And my father kneeling there;
And the old hymns thrill with the memory still
  Of my father's voice in prayer.

I can see his glance of approval
  As my part in the hymn I took;
I remember the grace of my mother's face,
  And the tenderness of her look;
And I knew that a gracious memory
  Cast its light on that face so fair
As her cheek flushed faint—O mother, my saint!—
  At my father's voice in prayer.

'Neath the stress of that marvelous pleading
All childish dissensions died;
Each rebellious will sank conquered and still
In a passion of love and pride.
Ah, the years have held exquisite voices,
And melodies tender and rare;
But tenderest seems the voice of my dreams—
My father's voice in prayer.

MY YOKE.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

"Come unto Me!" He said; and as I heard
His voice, a strange, vague longing in me stirred
That from that moment never hushed its cry.
And pitying He stood and looked on me
In tenderest sympathy;
And called my name, and would not pass me by.

"My yoke," the Master said; and I
Impatient, thrust the helpful, kind hand by,
Muttering, "Nay, lift this burden on me pressed.
I cannot lift my head Thy face to see,
It weighs so heavily.
Was not Thy promise, 'I will give you *rest*'?"

Yet still He waited. Sad the longing eyes
Of Him who meekly stood in suppliant guise
And pleaded with me, oh, so tenderly.
And my heart yearned to answer—but I heard
His softly spoken word—
"Child, take My yoke upon you—learn of Me."

The years passed on. Unwearying He stood
Beside me still, his footprints marked with blood,
His gentle voice entreating, "Take My yoke."
And that sharp cry of need within my breast
Pleaded with Him for rest,
While evermore His voice of labor spoke.

But the imploring eyes, the thorn-scarred brow,
The face, seamed with unutterable woe,
At last woke love in my complaining heart.
"Even Thy yoke, O Master," then I said,
Albeit with drooping head,
"Because Thou sufferedst, I will bear my part."

And lo! the grievous burden I had borne
Bound fast with cords,—the shrinking flesh all torn
And scarred, but closely veiled from mortal sight,—
Seemed lifted from me. And with upraised head
And grateful tears I said,
"Thy yoke is easy, and Thy burden light."

BETHLEHEM.

Fair Bethlehem, thy pastures lie
  Kissed by the sunlight, as of old,
And nightfall hears the shepherd's cry
  Still call his sheep within thy fold.

Ages ago did Israel's king
  Watch by his sheep on Bethlehem's plain,
Unknown, unhonored, listening
  God's voice, that called his child to reign.

O shepherd king, thy boyish brow
  Showed little sign of diadem.
Now warrior, king of Israel now,
  O shepherd boy of Bethlehem!

Years come, years go. The shepherd king
  And all his court are passed away;
Yet still the plains of Bethlehem
  Lift quiet faces to the day.

And David's city, as of old
  Its walls concealed a king unknown
Has given welcome scant and cold
  To one of more than earthly throne.

No crown upon that infant brow
  Tells of his glory or despair;
But angels watch, and angels know
  The light of God is shining there.

Thy crown is waiting! Agony
  And shame and grief are in the way,
The crown of thorns! while unto Thee
  The longing nations press their way.

Blessed art thou, O Bethlehem,
  Because of that fair infant's birth.
That child, the branch of David's stem
  Shall hold dominion o'er the earth.

Shall die to rise, shall rise to reign
  Upon a more than royal throne;
And He who lay in Bethlehem
  In glory shall receive his own.

EMMAUS.

Art thou a stranger even, and hast not heard
  The things that come to pass these bitter days?
Jesus of Nazareth is crucified—our Lord;
  And we walk desolate, in sore amaze.
We trusted it was he who should redeem
His waiting Israel--nay, a patriot's dream.

Our hearts go mourning ever in the gloom
That wrapped Golgotha and its crosses three.
We knelt in fruitless pleading at the tomb
Where Jews have stationed Roman soldiery.
And hope is dead, and faith yields to despair;
There is no living Saviour anywhere.

How heavily the woful hours have passed
Since his last lamentation pierced the air;
The rock-hewn cave that held his body fast,
Filled with sweet odors, like a woman's prayer,
Echoed in mournful answer to our cry.
The guards sealed up the door and thrust us by!

And when the women at the break of day
For his anointing brought their spices sweet,
The stone that closed the door was rolled away.
None know where rest those weary, mangled feet.
Nothing is left! and some already go
Back to their fishing: and we loved Him so!

Come, thou companion of our loneliness,
Abide with us; the day is now far spent.
Surely God sent thee our sad hearts to bless
As sorrowful across the hills we went.
Hadst thou but known our Lord! but now, beside
All this, 'tis three days since the Master died.

And they constrained Him; and the risen Lord,
Staying but for the entreaty of their need,
Entered the house with them—sat at their board,
Took bread, and blessed. As the familiar deed
Revealed the form unrecognized before,
Blessing the bread, they saw His face no more.

He passed from sight; but in their eager ears
Still breathed His blessing whom they mourned as dead.
And faith, upspringing from their conquered fears
Grew strong, since He was risen, as He said.
Forgotten were the cross, the rock-walled prison!
The Lord lay there no longer—He was risen!

From the dark cave where I have laid away
Hopes crowned with thorns, and dreams with spear-thrusts torn,
Comest, Thou, Lord, to join me on my way
As I go weeping, faithless and forlorn?
Until the day break and the shadows flee,
O risen Saviour, come, abide with me!

JORDAN.

Sun-kissed and reed-caressed, thy waters cool
Spring from the snowy founts that give them birth,
And laughing, singing on from pool to pool,

Bring life and freshness to the thirsty earth.
Leaping from rock to rock, or lying calm
In fair Genesaret, thou sing'st a psalm.

A psalm of thankfulness that thou hast been
The guardian of the land that God has loved.
Beyond thy waves lay Canaan's meadows green
When Israel from their prison-house removed,
And thy bright borders from the desert dry
Welcomed the footsore, homesick company.

Thy floods recoiled before the ark of God
Borne by the priests, while Israel's host passed by.
Upon thy marge the holy Baptist trod
And viewed the wonder of the opening sky.
Thy reeds their whispers hushed to hear the word
That owned and blessed the Incarnate Son of God.

The Master, passing by on wearied feet,
Was fain to lave them in thy shallows clear.
From quiet hamlet and from busy street
The people thronged thy banks, His voice to hear.
On overlooking heights the chill night air
Breathed on his forehead, as he knelt in prayer.

In pastures green the shepherd leads his sheep,
By waters still, as centuries ago.
We seem to hear, in the night-watches deep,

The music of the Psalmist murmured low.
These pass away; thy banks turn brown, turn green
Again; thou cherishest what thou hast seen.

There is a River, whose pellucid flow
Makes glad the radiant city of our God;
Whose waters with life-giving freshness flow,
And by whose banks no foot in pain hath trod.
May thy bright waters but the symbol be
Of that, outflowing from the tideless sea.

THE MASTER CALLETH THEE.

Fair land, who liest in thy wealth of flowers,
Drooping, and curst with sin's dread slavery,
Hearest thou in the slowly passing hours
Him who entreateth thee?

Soft through the darkness hearest thou His voice,
Calling 'neath waving palm and tangled bower,
Echoing through ruined shrines to thee, "Rejoice!
It is my promised hour"?

"O let me in!" the Master's voice entreats;
"I have redeemed thee with the price I paid."
And through the shattered temples still repeats
"Redeemed!" through court and glade.

Lift up thy head, unhappiest! unto thee
He offers freedom for sin's servitude;
Garments of praise for heaviness; and see,
For ashes, sweetest food.

Into thy homes, O loveliest! let Him in.
Thy guarded portals to the Lord unbar.
He hath redeemed thee! cleansed from stain of sin,
Thy light shall shine afar.

TYRE.

O Tyre, proud mistress of the seas!
The sun has tipped thy stately towers
With splendor, and the morning breeze
Laughs in the revel of thy hours.
It kisses light the sea, that creeps
A suppliant, to thy queenly feet,
And o'er thy crowded shipping sweeps,
Rejoicing, in its passage fleet.

No lack hast thou of gems or gold;
Thy purple wraps thy dainty limbs;
Thy hands earth's ponderous sceptre hold;
No rival state thy prospect dims;
Yet, Tyre, thy reign is near its doom—
Thy kingdom totters to its fall,
Proud empress, wrap thyself in gloom,
For God is ruler over all.

Still falls the sunlight where those towers
Upraised their heads to meet its glance;
Still, as in those joy-crowded hours,
The light winds on the waters dance;
But now no stately palaces
Look proudly on the subject sea;
Prostrate the mighty empress lies:
Her victor reigns eternally.

Her sorrow, like a mantle, shuts
Her heart from hope, her hands from toil;
Her palaces are fishers' huts;
Her purple robes her salt tears soil.
The Lord hath spoken! bow thy head
And own his word of doom fulfilled.
Thy glory lies among the dead;
Thy fall Omnipotence has willed.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

Upon the city, like the pallid light
Of distant stars, the hoar-frost gleaming lay
And chanting shrilly, through the winter night
Swift rushing on, the wind-choir swept its way.

It was the night men said "The Christ is born!"
And all the city was aglow with flame,
Making with tapers mimicry of dawn,
To honor Him who in a manger came.

But out of light and warmth, out where the frost
Thrust its chill fingers in his stagnant blood,
Lay, by some chance wave in its passing tossed,
A bit of human driftwood in life's flood.

Why, when all men rejoiced, upon that night
Lay he uncared for in the bitter cold?
Was not for his dull eyes the world's great light?
Not for his ears the angel's anthem rolled

Over the plains of lowly Bethlehem!
Pitiful Christ! give us Thy heart to know
Thy little ones; and kindness unto them
Count Thou as service unto Thee below.

IN ABSENCE.

How shall I think of thee when thou art gone?
Not with faint shadowings of lonely fancies,
Not in the unreal light of thought bound trances
Shall I recall thy name at waking dawn;

But as a thought of heaven-sent help to do
Faithfully, bravely what my God may send me,
This is the memory that shall attend me,
This shall gild all the days thine absence through.

BY THE CONGO RIVER.

Faintly the palm-crests quiver;
Bright are the tropical flowers;
Far up its gorges the river
Roars through the burning hours;
Breathless the valleys are lying
Parched in the burning heat,
While for the far river sighing
Sob hidden brooklets sweet.

Fair is the land in its seeming
Under the tropic sun;
Faint with the heat it lies dreaming;
Fair, but alas, undone.
Forests and marshes are glowing
In the rejoicing light,
But by the brown river flowing
Settles a drear midnight.

Dark are the faces upturning
Drearily to the sky.
Dark are the sad spirits, burning,
Aching, they know not why.
They, 'mid the wonderful glory
Of the rejoicing earth
Know not the marvelous story
Of the Redeemer's birth.
Darkness is brooding around them,

Darkness of starless night;
Centuries passing have found them
Smitten with hopeless blight.
Sorrowful voices are calling
Joining the river's moan—
Crying with anguish appalling,
Why are we left alone?

Listen! a low moan beateth
Solemnly on the ear.
Hopeless the spirit fleeteth.
Listen! can ye not hear?
Though all the world rejoices,
Shrill through the revelry
Rise those imploring voices—
Sounds on that mournful cry!

THE CHANGED LAND.

From North to South the fair land lay
Soft-smiling in the flush of morn;
Its bright shores kissed by flying spray,
Its hills uplifting to the dawn
Their summits, crowned with snowy crowns
And wrapped in trailing robes of mist.
Its lakes beat restless at their bounds
Like fretted sheets of amethyst;

And dusky faces smiled beneath
Its bending trees, and by its streams
The child's small fingers wove their wreath,
The Indian maiden dreamed her dreams.
How changed, dear land, is all thy face!
The simple people and their homes
Vanish before a stronger race
That crowding in their footsteps comes.

White in the sun thy shipping gleams;
Where once but pathless forest lay
Fair cities rise; and on thy streams
A thousand mill-wheels shower their spray.
From East to West the land is crossed
With shining tracks of burnished steel;
And called by echoing chimes wind-tossed
The gathered people reverent kneel.

Thy fertile meadows, where the deer
Lay in the lush grass, cool and sweet,
Laugh 'neath their golden load; the Year,
In gathering, heaps it at thy feet.
Gaunt Famine reaches fleshless hands
Across the seas; and from thy store
Thou sendest to the Mother-land
The treasures that thy broad fields bore.

When, undismayed, Columbus dared
The perils of the unknown seas,
He little dreamed, as on he fared,
The changes of the centuries;
But pressing on to far Cathay,
Through storm and calm his sails unfurled,
He sought to fame and wealth a way,
But found, indeed, an unknown world.

TO MY NEIGHBOR'S CHILD.

Dear little hands that clasp and cling
And touch my cheek with light caress,
Ye set my sad thoughts wandering
Through shadowed years of loneliness.
Your fingers passing to and fro
Like softly dropping tears might be;
For the wee hands that loved me so
Are lost to me—are lost to me!

Dear little one with sunny hair
And drowsy eyelids drooping low,
My baby's head once nestled there
Upon my shoulder, long ago,
But now for me no bright eyes shine;
And empty is my heart and sore;
The sweet child-face, upraised to mine
Will come no more—will come no more!

Dear rosy lips, so frank and free
Upraised to mine, unstained and pure,
I take your kisses gratefully,
And with them courage to endure.
I hold you close, for my child's sake;
God keep you thus, all undefiled!
You cannot know how hearts can ache
That miss the presence of a child!

SIXTEEN.

TO SUSIE.

Sweet sixteen! and the eyes are dancing,
The hair lies soft on the unlined brow.
Never a shade of the years advancing
Touches the heart that lies dreaming now.
Childhood and girlhood will soon be over;
Womanhood comes full fast, I ween;
Where will you be, my winsome rover,
When, like me, you are *twice* sixteen?

Sweet sixteen! and the years are laden
Each with their burden of daily care;
Each of them bearing away, my maiden,
Something you fain would have cherished there.
You will remember the school days olden,
The river will call to you, loud and plain;
The moonlight never will seem so golden
Nor the ring of the skates so clear again.

But for each vanished girlish treasure
Laid aside, it may chance, with tears,
Life shall bring you a fuller measure,
Lapped in the heart of the coming years.
Heart to share with sad hearts its blessing;
Strength to labor with brow serene;
Hands to meet yours in love's caressing—
These are my wish for you, Sweet Sixteen.

A WISH.

To lie in sleepy meadows, with milk-white violets crowned;
Above me sailing, sailing the white mists, and around
The straight, lithe grasses bending to sweep across my cheek,
And fern-lips kissing my still lips, that need not part to speak;
The dim, faint, whirring harmony of locust and of bee
Above me rising, rising; a robin warily
Close watching, till my stillness he does not deign to fear,
And pours his careless rapture to heaven, crystal-clear;
And just one crested elm-tree, a silent sentinel,
While in the distant pine-tops the winds, grown weary, dwell.
Ah, this one wish! Ye fairies that guard the Wishing Well,

Give me one draught of water, and wind your magic spell;
Then bear me where this valley sleeps 'neath a watching peak,
And lay me in the silence, the grass against my cheek.

APRIL.

Above me bends a tender sky—
Such sky as only April brings—
Below, the blue stream glitters by;
Around, I hear the whirr of wings.

There is no leaf on bush or tree;
The wayside shows no hint of green;
But if you bend on reverent knee
The pale arbutus smiles serene,

Pushing aside the withered leaves
With blossoms like a baby's hands;
The earth's warm breast impatient heaves;
All crowned with gold the alder stands.

A perfect day! The cool, fresh wind
Bears pleasant odors on its wings;
And, lightly passing, leaves behind
Sweet promises of lovelier things.

O bluebird, from your highest flight
You brought the sky's own color back.
Our eyes are dazzled, as the sight
Essays to follow your bright track.

And robin, you have sung so long
To these fresh winds, this laughing-stream,
They too are jubilant with song;
The brilliant air is all agleam.

Save where the wraith-like clouds flit by,
Blown by the hurrying April wind.
Pass, cloud and chill, from out our sky,
And leave this perfect blue behind.

WITH VIOLETS.

I wandered in the woods but yesterday,
And heard the first faint voices of the spring.
Around me, violet-crowned, the black mould lay.
Above me passed a whirring robin's wing.
And all the bursting buds in soft, low harmony,
Breathed to my listening ears a message, Love, for thee.

So here I bring its burden. Bend, I pray,
Thy dear head down, and listen with thy heart;
And thou shalt hear these wind-taught petals say
What my poor lips could utter but in part.
Then think the Forest chose me for its messenger
Because my heart retained each word imprinted there.

AT EVENTIDE.

I walked in a garden at gray eventide;
The clouds hanging heavy and low
Seemed weeping for loneliness; heavily sighed
The wind sweeping drearily through.
And lily and rose seemed so desolate there
That sobbing I hastened along
And paced with impatient step restlessly where
I heard a low, soft falling song.

Oh, gently it faltered upon the chill air—
A low brooding strain of delight.
I saw not the singer—she sang hidden where
The leaves closed her nest from my sight.
But into my heart stole the song of the bird
Like balm on its pain and unrest;
And answering back, in my spirit there stirred
The courage that reigned in her breast.

"THERE'S PANSIES, THAT'S FOR THOUGHTS."

TO E. D. M.

"There's pansies, that's for thoughts"—bright flower-
faces,
Lifting their cheerful eyes in quiet places.

So may thy girlhood's years that speed above thee
Bring pleasant thought of thee to us who love thee.

May God be with thee, wheresoe'er thou rovest;
May God be gracious to the hearts thou lovest;
Crown thee with mercies like the pansies golden,
Keep thee in safety in His arms enfolden.

AN IDYL OF THE SPRING.

Across the half-clad branches
The softened sunlight falls,
Its mellow glory slanting
Through stately forest-halls.
The amber green of spring-time
Folds over barren sprays,
Above its faint bloom floating
A dream of summer days.
And like an angel's blessing
The passing wind's rich psalm
Swells through the breathless silence
And dies away in calm.

Beneath our feet are peeping
The heralds of the spring,
Wind-flower and daisy lifting
Their starry blossoming.
They whisper of the summer,
Of fair June's perfect day;

The grace of incompleteness
Is thine, beloved May.
Thine is the tender promise
Of coming leaf and bloom,
And thine the rare heart-choral
Of earth and heaven in tune.

Now fainter falls the sunlight;
Within the western sky
The crimson sunset roses
Bloom out, and fade, and die.
Around us, gray and gloomy,
The forest-shadows fall;
From branch to branch the song-birds
Pipe low their good-night call.
And still the beauty lingers
Within the deepening shade;
And still the great wind-organ
By angel hands is played.

PHŒBE.

The fields are brown and the skies are gray,
And the streams are bound in the Frost-King's sway.
The desolate earth lies bare and cold,
And the chill wind whistles on wood and wold.
I wonder how long ere the brooks are free
And the birds come! Listen!—
"Phœbe! Phœbe!"

O brave little heart! from the raw chill wind
I shiver and shrink, my snug doors behind;
But you in the leafless branches dwell,
And over and over your name you tell.
"No matter how dreary the skies may be,
I wait for the sunshine—
Phœbe! Phœbe!"

And lo! from the gray of the dull March skies
A shaft of gold at my window lies;
And out of the bare earth reaching up
The crocus is holding her dainty cup;
And the catkins swell on the willow tree;
True prophet wert thou,
Phœbe! Phœbe!

Unclouded blue is the bright March sky.
The wind has swept all the dark clouds by.
And there in the copse, where the hazel buds
Are swelling and bursting their glossy hoods,
A little bird's throat is just splitting with glee;
The sunshine has come to
Phœbe! Phœbe!

THE NIGHT BIRD'S SONG.

I never heard it but once; and then,
Out of the darkness that lay around,

Out of the gloom of the dusky fen,
Throbbed, like a heart-beat, that strange, sweet sound.

All through the hush of the July eve
I dreamed in the twilight, as maidens dream,
Heard in the thicket the whippoorwill grieve,
Heard the light laugh of the little stream,

Then, 'neath clouds and the stars and dew,
Roamed out alone in the moonless night.
Tall marsh-grass bent as I hurried through,
The drowsy river came in sight.

So slow and deep in its marsh-fringed bed
It rolled, that no ripple the surface marred.
I stood in the silence and bowed my head;
Prayed; for the heavens seemed cold and hard.

Out of the silence so deep, so deep
It sunk to my heart and made silence there,
When it seemed no sound save of souls who weep
In loneliness born of a great despair

Could break that marvelous hush, a sound
Fell, like a star falling through the mist;
As if heaven's portals had been unbound
And the gold had entered the amethyst.

Earth holds but one rare singer like this.
And the quivering tide of melody
Is heard but once in a life, I wis.
It will never be sung again to me.

THE PROMISE OF DAY.

Across the brown furrows the swallows
Are wheeling their flight;
In deep-shaded nooks and in hollows
Is darkened the light;
The twilight the sunset glow follows,
And then cometh night.

The sunshine of life is departed,
And dimmed to our eyes
The beauty of lilies gold-hearted
Or gold of the skies;
And tears in the twilight have started
At sad memories.

Yet the light that above us is fading
Oft faded before.
The night in its gloomiest shading
Holds infinite store
Of manifold mercies whose lading
Is rich as of yore.

Be steadfast, ye stars that are shining
Above in the blue.
Though we in our bitter repining
Scarce look up to you,
Yet God, all our weakness divining,
Still bids you shine true.

And out where night's pillars are rifted
With deep amethyst,
And over the skies that are drifted
With tremulous mist,
And where the last sunlight lies sifted
On flowers that it kissed

We read as in characters golden
The sign of His power.
Though round them the night's robes are folden,
His stars keep the hour.
Our lives in His great heart are holden
Like dew in the flower.

We hear in the night wind that's blowing
The promise of day;
On the hills where the sunset is glowing
The sunrise will play;
The fields that lie black 'neath the sowing
Yield harvest some day.

RECONCILED.

Give thanks that the clouds of the old year
  Are melting away in the new!
Kneel low in your chamber and pray, dear,
  As I have been praying for you.
The gray of the storm-clouds has broken,
  The sapphire and gold are in sight;
The sunlight has flung us a token
  That we may be grateful to-night.

Bewildering mists that have risen
  Like shadows of fear in a dream
Have ope'd their intangible prison
  And showed us the sky all agleam.
The pride that our passion obeying
  Still kept us apart when most near,
Has softened 'neath loving and praying,
  And melts at the touch of a tear.

How sure have our footsteps been guided
  When each thought the other unkind!
How strange that we bitterly chided
  The Hand that our lives intertwined!
And now, in the sunlight that's shining
  In rays on our path through the year,
The shade of our ways past divining,
  Give thanks for this brightened lot, dear.

SEHNSUCHT.

Like the voice of the wind at night,
When the household lights are out
And the children are asleep,
Comes a cry of desire and delight
When all is silent about,
And it calls to me, long and deep.

Oh, heart of my heart, that cries
And never is wholly at rest
In silence or in the throng—
Thy passionate yearning lies
Deep-hidden and unconfessed;—
And its voice is the voice of Song.

Like the voice of the wind and storm
And the bursting sob of the sea
In its bounds it cannot o'erpass
So passionate, yet without form,
My longing cries out in me,
And struggles, alas! alas!

THE WIND FROM OFF THE SEA.

O strong, sweet wind, blown inland
Across the burning sands,
I feel thee on my forehead;
I reach thee eager hands.

The whitening surf is calling
My heart unto its own;
The sea sobs out its longing
In ceaseless undertone.

My spirit hastens outward
With hurried, breathless flight,
Beyond the green salt-meadows,
Beyond the coming night,

Far outward! As the sea-bird
That sleeps upon thy breast
Droops downward to thy bosom,
My heart on thine would rest.

O strong sweet wind, thou bringest
Like breath of life to me,
Long exiled from its kisses,
The greeting of the Sea.

GALILEE.

The curling waves that kiss thy strand
Are those that once the Master trod;
The steadfast heights that voiceless stand
Have seen the miracles of God.
The cloudless, silent, watching sky
Has read his life's grand mystery;
His memories still about thee lie,
O sacred Sea of Galilee!

How cowered thy waters 'neath the word
Of Him whose powers the worlds obey!
How did they spring to bear their Lord
Whose vessel on thy bosom lay!
The multitude upon thy banks
Were fed by Him who walked on thee;
Thy murmur mingled with their thanks,
O loyal Sea of Galilee.

Did Jairus' daughter often roam
In her young beauty to thy side?
And didst thou hear the weepers' moan
Wailing "Alas! the maid hath died"?
Across thy waves the Master's voice
Comes sounding to us tenderly.
By thee their mourning changed to joys,
O blessed Sea of Galilee.

Thy shores are consecrated ground.
Thy ripples flash in heaven's own light.
From thee the Master's words resound
Throughout earth's gloomy closing night.
The morning breaketh! from the sky
Thine absent King returns to thee;
Rejoice, and lift thy billows high,
O waiting Sea of Galilee.

THE SHEPHERD'S ANOINTING.

Unto the sacrifice they go;
The prophet scans each eager face;
Among them all, how shall he know
On whom the Lord hath laid His grace?

"This, Lord?" Not this, though brow be fair,
Though like a massive pine he stands;
Nay, I will choose among them there
The one on whom ye shall lay hands.

Lo, out beneath the valley's rim
The youngest lad is tending sheep.
They send in haste to summon him;
A servant goes his flock to keep.

The bright head bows; the dancing eyes
Fall to the ground with sudden awe;
Who knows what half-seen prophecies
Blotted the landscape that he saw?

The peril and the nation's praise;
The power unto a burden grown;
The nights of flight, the hunted days,
The splendor of the kingly throne,

The vision of his human life
With glory and with anguish filled,
While through its clamor and its strife
The passion of his harpstrings thrilled—

All this, half guessed and dimly dreamed,
Before his young eyes seemed to pass.
His father's house a palace seemed,
And Israel's hosts the tufted grass.

'Twas but a moment, and the lad,
Silent and wondering, gazes round.
The prophet's eyes were kind and sad;
His brethren, staring, made no sound.

The blood glowed in his face so fair;
The murmured blessing echoed deep.
With God's anointing on his hair
He went once more to tend his sheep.

ART THOU HE?

Luke vii. 20.

A prayer ascends from many a sorrowing mother:
Art thou—they question, sighing wearily—
He that should come, or look we for another?
With passionate insistence—Art thou He?

We hear afar the sound of bitter weeping,
The wail of mothers in their agony;
The moan of babes, for very sorrow sleeping.
And by their sobs entreating—Art thou He?

Prisoned and helpless 'mid the desolation,
Our hearts are sore oppressed with misery.
If thou indeed art come to save our nation
Hark to our cry and answer—Art thou He?

Hush! at His feet the sighs are changed to singing;
The dead are raised to life; the blinded see;
Unto the poor the glad good news comes bringing
Beauty for ashes. Surely, this is He.

Yea! though we perish, locked within our prison!
Yea! though his day of power we may not see;
Yea! though himself be crucified, nor risen
Yet to our aching vision—this is He.

Slowly though move the chariot wheels eternal,
Straight through the darkness onward moveth He;
The prison gloom is pierced by dawn supernal.
Our God, for whom we waited; this is He.

TELL IT TO JESUS.

Tell it all to Jesus—the hours of restless waking,
The sharp, swift stab of agony, the sorely failing strength,
Throughout the weary watches thy pillow ne'er forsaking
His hand shall rest upon thee, and His peace shall come at length.

Tell it all to Jesus—the grief that knows no healing,
The wrong that's past forgetting, the bitterness untold
Upon the quivering heartstrings His tenderness comes stealing,
And His divine compassion shall thy broken life enfold.

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.

Weary and burdened, with grief oppressed,
Saviour, in Thee would we find our rest.
Hearts that are broken,
Sorrows unspoken,
Find a sure refuge upon Thy breast.
Pity, O Saviour!
Grant us thy favor.
Weeping endureth the long, long night.
Oh, may the morning
In splendor dawning
Bring to our heavy hearts joy with the light.
Thou who canst bid all our sorrows cease,
Comfort our hearts with Thy touch of peace.
Waking or sleeping,
In thy kind keeping,
Comfort us, Lord, with Thy touch of peace.

"THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."

Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 25; Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 18.

"They crucified Him!" With a sob
The writer pauses in his tale,
His great heart beating, throb on throb,
As if the echo of that wail
Which stabbed the shuddering air again
Beat on his senses—"Crucify!"
As if he felt once more the pain,
The shame of awful Calvary.

And we—we read the piteous words
As of a tale of by-gone days.
We shudder at the dying Lord's
Passion, but yield nor prayer nor praise.
In thoughtless mood we bow the head,
With careless hearts we bend the knee,
Yet do our feet refuse to tread
The stony heights of Calvary.

Yet if our wayward feet are led
Past grove and garden, hall and street
To find that Mount on which He bled
Who walked that way with bruised feet,—
With precious blood its slopes are wet,
With blood poured out for you and me,—
Forgive us, Lord, that we forget
The footprints on sad Calvary.

"They crucified Him!" Tenderly
They bear his body to its tomb.
In life a homeless wanderer he,
In death the rich prepare him room.
And at his feet who bore our sins
In his own body on the tree,
'Tis at his feet our life begins
Who died for us on Calvary.

RESURGIT.

Life to the hills returns; and on the fields
Is spread their robe of resurrection; there
The wood the crimson of its new buds yields
And with its perfume drenches the cool air.
The piteous plaining of a widowed dove
Is drowned in cooings over new-built nests;
The Spring is greeted in a thousand breasts,
But he returns not to our yearning love.

Beneath the showers from soft-hued skies that fall
The buried seed awakes, and lifts its head
To greet the sun, and answer to the call
Of the warm wind that whispers o'er its bed.
But on the sod that guards this precious dust
Still falls the shower of unforgetting tears;
And weary months go by, and lagging years,
While mourning Love still sighs and strives to trust.

Wait but a little yet! the light shall dart
Throughout the dark where sleeping lies our dead.
The widowed heart shall lie upon his heart,
And crowned with life shall rise that shining head.
Hand clasped in hand, when from the winter-sleep
That which was mortal shall immortal rise,
Our eyes shall see the King, and in His eyes
Long gazing, shall for aye forget to weep.

BEREAVEMENT.

Though icy bands dispute their way,
The hidden brooks still singing flow;
The rock-strewn hillsides, bare and gray,
Were robed in ermine long ago.
These yet shall greet the summer's day,
But he is gone who loved them so.

A wailing wind that stirs the trees
Among the pines is moving slow.
It thrills in wierdest harmonies
And drops in minor music low.
Pass into silence! Sounds like these
Reach not his ear who loved them so.

Stir not, ye wearied ones who rest
Where God doth quiet sleep bestow.

We bring our dearest and our best
To lie with you beneath the snow.
And anguished love, too late confessed,
Cries out in vain, "We loved him so!"

THE MANTLE OF THE DEAD.

It lies above them like a mantle, cold
And pure, in frozen beauty, fold on fold;
It wraps the bare, dry earth with loving care,
And all that meets our eyes is pure and fair.
How fairer far the forms that lie below,
Ah, none but mourners know.

Yet they were not unmarred, that lie so white
Beneath the kisses of the winter light.
With deep grieved hearts, what bitter tears we shed!
Why mourn we with such sorrow for the dead?
Ah, over all the past lies, drooping low,
The error-hiding snow.

O chilling mantle! droop thy fringe not yet
On life, that we in grief may faults forget.
Let it not be in vain that those we prize
Look sorrowing, repentant in our eyes
To see there our forgiveness and our trust
Ere they lie in the dust.

THE LAST WATCH.

The house is silent, save the ticking clock
And crackling fire that leaps and flares and dies;
And out-of-doors the October night-wind sighs
And shudders with shrill whispers at the lock
Where the dead master lies.

The early frost that chills the shrinking flesh
Is not so cold as he, so marble fair;
The head that seemed an aureole to wear
Lies with the moonbeams tangled in the mesh
Of silver beard and hair.

So cold! So still! The music of his voice
The echoing rooms shall waken nevermore!
Heart pulseless grown! Upon the silent floor
His coming step shall make no heart rejoice
As it was wont of yore.

Beneath the roof that now is masterless
The out-worn watchers fain their eyes would close
Yet, dreaming, Love bereaved its sorrow knows
And sobs in sleep beneath the piteous stress
Of his unstirred repose.

O widowed heart, thy watching all is done!
Drop thy tired head, and lose thy grief in sleep!
Let other eyes this last long vigil keep,
And yield this service to his brother's son
Who fain with you would weep.

Widowed and fatherless! The silence grows
More chill and heavy as the hours drag on.
To sad remembrance wakes the clouded dawn
And aching eyes from bitter dreams unclose
To see a weary morn.

Dim in the East a pallid day-dawn steals
Across the hills that 'gainst the sky afar
Like new-filled graves the day-light's portals bar.
Yet while despairing grief in anguish kneels
Still shines the Morning Star.

"HE IS NOT HERE, HE IS RISEN."

From out the shadow of the tomb
The Lord has passed to life and light.
The earth, that veiled herself in gloom,
Forgets the horror of that night.

O risen Lord, our hearts were sore.
We thought to find the stone unmoved;
The fragrant spices that we bore
Were for his body whom we loved.

No longer, hopeless in our woe,
The path of grief we sorrowing tread.
Spake not the watching angel so?
"Seek not the living 'mongst the dead!"

Not here! not where man's greed and hate
Defile the land with guiltless blood!
O seeking soul, most desolate,
Look up! behold thy living God!

Yea, thou shalt see his promised hour
Despite of Sin and Death and Hell;
For, crucified and raised in power,
He hath redeemed His Israel.

THE SHADOW OF A GRAVE.

Nor wide nor high the grassy mound
That earth for his last couch doth lend.
So low it lies upon the ground
The very daisies o'er it bend.

And 'neath the kiss of cloudless skies
The grasses far above it wave.
And yet the whole world darkened lies
Within the shadow of that grave.

SAMUEL P. NOTTAGE,

DIED MAY 30, 1896.

Silent the sun-bathed hill-side, hushed are the laugh and jest;
Only the birds in the branches twitter above the nest,
Only the river floweth softly kissing the sod;
Silent the spirit goeth suddenly back to God.

Tears? they will come to-morrow! many a lonely hour
Waits with its load of sorrow, crushing the heart with its power.
His widowed heart is past aching, placid his troubled breast;
Why for *him* should we be making moan, since he lies at rest?

Past are his lonely hours, ended his need of tears;
Our God will wipe them forever in His eternal years.
There shall be no more parting, there shall be no more pain,
But the voice that his heart has longed for shall welcome him home again.

But now, when I wake in the morning and quiet and listening lie,
Hearing the birds in the branches and the river rippling by,
Comes the vision of that bright hill-side, with the waters kissing its sod
Whence sudden and swift and silent, his spirit returned to God.

TERRA MORTIS.

Out of the failing year,
Borne on a breaking heart,

Goes one who will not hear
  Sobs that unbidden start.
Into thy land, O Death,
  Where mourning Love would stay,
Where Memory tarrieth,
  Bear we our dead to-day.

All things beneath the sun
  Come to an end in thee.
Races for palms unwon
  End at the bitter sea;
Baubles of Fame and Pride
  Break like the breaking foam.
Love still unsatisfied
  Finds on this shore its home.

Voices once silver-sweet
  Die into silence here.
Hearts that with passion beat
  Throb not to love nor fear.
Brows that were laurel-crowned
  Heaped with dark sea-weed lie.
Dark is each lowly mound,
  Shadowed with mystery.

Into thy land, O Death
  Come with unwilling feet
All that hath life and breath,
  All that is dear and sweet.
By the gray Sea of Tears,
  Splashing its bitter spray

Over our hopes and fears,
Leave we our dead to-day.

Patience awhile, my heart!
There shall be room for thee,
Wearied out as thou art,
In this still company;
Weep for a little now;
Thou shalt weep never a tear
When with untroubled brow
Thou shalt lie sleeping here.

OUR COMFORTER.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

Let us come in unto your fellowship,
Ye that sit desolate in darkened places;
Ye that with downcast eye and quivering lip
Recall the tenderness of vanished faces;
Ye that are mourning, we are mourners too.
We seek your comfort since your grief we knew.

We, too, have seen the radiance on the dead
Dear face, before to dust its beauty faded.
We listen for the well-remembered tread,
And miss the smile that left the household shaded.
The hymns he loved now other voices raise,
Yet God for sobs of grief gives songs of praise.

Yet do our eyes seek heaven, though tears be shed;
Yet are we comforted, though hearts are aching.
For He is near, whose voice shall wake the dead,
And binds and heals the spirits almost breaking.
Sad hearts! although we weep and are forlorn,
He leaves us not all comfortless to mourn.

A little space the sunlight fades to night,
But the eternal years bring endless morrow.
Ere long the burden will grow strangely light,
And we shall read the meaning of this sorrow.
To Thee the widow and the orphan cry:
Our Comforter be thou, O Lord Most High.

ON NOQUOCHOKE RIVER.

While the dancing wave a-quiver
Shows the first pale evening star,
Bear me down, impatient River,
Where the deepening waters are;
Past the weeds among the islands
Reaching out entangling arms,
Past the meadows, past the highlands,
Dangerous eddies, treacherous calm.
Swiftly, lightly bear me onward
Loving River, on thy breast,
Till my heart and thine together
In the great Sea find our rest.

Heart, my Heart, dost feel the River
  Clasp thee in its arms of love?
Naught need make thee start or shiver,
  Rocks beneath, or clouds above.
Tenderly the waves caressing
  Murmur, while the twilight falls,
Broken sighs of love, of blessing,
  And the Sea unceasing calls
Thee and me, O eager River.
  Yearning, longing, wordlessly,
Hastening on, delaying never,
  Toward the passion of the Sea.

River, hearest thou the calling
  Of the great Sea's mighty tide,
On the gleaming beaches falling,
  Calling still, unsatisfied?
Swiftly flow, by Love's power holden,
  While the cold light leaves the west,
And the gray moon, cloud enfolden,
  Rises ere we gain our rest.
So God's love calls through the thronging
  Of all paths by tired feet trod;
So all human love and longing
  Bears us upward unto God.

IF YOU LOVE ME, TELL ME SO.

If you love me, tell me so!
Let the words drop tenderly
On my heart when you can see
That my strength is ebbing low.
When my lagging footsteps pass
Heedless of the springing grass,
Careless of the flowers below,
If you love me, tell me so.

If you love me, tell me so.
Pain grows lighter when I hear
Words my maiden heart held dear—
Words you often whispered low.
Let the magic that they bear
Sweeten all my daily care,
Steal the sharpest sting from woe!
If you love me, tell me so.

In the depths of memory
I can hear them echoing;
And the happy accents sing
All my life's joy out to me.
Now when rosy skies are gray
How I long to hear you say
Those dear words of long ago,
If you love me, tell me so.

Strength and hope and courage fail;
Eager will and busy hand
Will not serve at my command;
Dreams of youth grow dull and pale.
Where the young June grasses wave
Half my life lies in a grave.
You are left to me; but oh,
If you love me, tell me so.

One of us some day must lie
Voiceless, pulseless, cold and still.
Dreaming on that grassy hill
'Neath the kisses of the sky.
Tenderness will be in vain,
Memory will but quicken pain.
Ere our steps asunder go,
If you love me, tell me so!

THE PERFECT VOICE.

The organ, like a fettered soul,
Pours out upon the listening air,
As throbbing billows upward roll,
The wordless burden of its prayer.
Then, stealing on its ebb and flow,
Appealing voices softly plead,
Upbearing on its cadence slow
The ceaseless cry of human need.

As the wind-harp's awakened tones
  Respond, when by the wind caressed,—
Each chord the forceful impulse owns,
  Yet one sounds sweeter than the rest,—
So, rising on the Sabbath calm,
  These voices blend in harmony;
Yet, singing soft the dear old psalm,
  There is one perfect voice for me.

What depths of sorrowful regret
  Lie in the full-toned melody!
Lord, grant I never may forget
  This humble prayer that speeds to Thee.
I bow my head upon my hands;
  More need that I should pray that prayer.
O voice, my spirit silent stands;
  Thou art with God—speak for me there!

LITTLE THINGS.

Thou desirest great things;
  But bide God's time.
Whether thy life's hymn seems
  Plain prose or rhyme.

Whether thy life run on
  In quiet way,
Having small things to do,
  Little to say.

Or if an honored place
Great men among
Thou hold'st, by skill of pen,
Pencil or tongue.

Still thou mayest serve thy God
With loving heart
And ready, willing hand
Where'er thou art.

If roses line thy path
Or violets,
Ever remember this:
God ne'er forgets

To give thee some sweet flowers;
The humblest are the best,
Thank Him for what He sends
And leave the rest.

L. of C.

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